

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of activating data at a local computer, comprising the steps of:
 - a. transmitting via a global computer network, from the local computer to a central server, a request data packet that includes information that identifies a user and that identifies a specific unit of data that the user desires to activate, the specific unit of data belonging to a predefined plurality of units of data that are stored local to the local computer;
 - b. receiving a unit-specific activating data packet from the central server at the local computer; and
 - c. executing a routine at the local computer that uses the unit-specific activating data packet to activate the specific unit of data.
2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the receiving step comprises receiving a control data packet used to create an encrypted file on the local computer that includes data necessary to execute a run routine that causes the specific unit of data to be activated.
3. The method of Claim 1, wherein the receiving step comprises receiving a control data packet used to modify a previously-created encrypted file on the local computer that includes data necessary to execute a run routine that causes the specific unit of data to be activated.
4. The method of Claim 1, wherein the receiving step comprises receiving an encryption key that may be used in decrypting the specific unit of data.
5. The method of Claim 1, wherein the executing step comprises running a plug-in on the local computer.

6. The method of Claim 1, wherein specific unit of data comprises a computer-run lesson and wherein the predefined plurality of units of data comprise a suite of computer-run lessons.
7. A method of activating a computer-based lesson on a local computer, comprising the steps of:
- transmitting via a global computer network, from the local computer to a central server, a request data packet that includes information that identifies a user and a specific lesson that the user desires to activate, the specific lesson belonging to a predefined plurality of lessons that are stored on the local computer;
 - receiving a lesson-specific activating data packet from the central server at the local computer;
 - executing a routine at the local computer that uses the lesson-specific activating data packet to activate the specific lesson; and
 - running the specific lesson on the local computer.
8. The method of Claim 7, wherein the receiving step comprises receiving a control data packet used to create an encrypted file on the local computer that includes data necessary to execute a run routine that causes the specific unit of data to be activated.
9. The method of Claim 7, wherein the receiving step comprises receiving a control data packet used to modify a previously-created encrypted file on the local computer that includes data necessary to execute a run routine that causes the specific unit of data to be activated.
10. The method of Claim 7, wherein the receiving step comprises receiving an encryption key that may be used in decrypting the specific unit of data.

11. The method of Claim 7, wherein the executing step comprises running a plug-in on the local computer.
12. A method of activating computer-readable data from a central server, comprising the steps of:
- a. receiving at the central server a request data packet from a local computer via a global computer network, the request data packet including information that identifies a user and that identifies a specific unit of data that the user desires to activate, the specific unit of data belonging to a predefined plurality of units of data that are stored local to the local computer;
 - b. executing a verification routine that determines if the user is authorized to activate the specific unit of data; and
 - c. if the user is authorized to activate the specific unit of data, then transmitting a unit-specific activating data packet from the central server to the local computer, wherein the activating data packet allows the local computer to activate the specific unit of data.
13. The method of Claim 12, wherein the verification routine determines if the user has paid for the specific unit of data.
14. The method of Claim 12, wherein the transmitting step comprises transmitting a control data packet used to create an encrypted file on the local computer that includes data necessary to execute a run routine that causes the specific unit of data to be activated.
15. The method of Claim 14, further comprising the step of executing the run routine by activating a plug-in that is resident on the local computer.
16. The method of Claim 12, wherein the transmitting step comprises transmitting a control data packet used to modify a previously-created encrypted file on the

local computer that includes data necessary to execute a run routine that causes the specific unit of data to be activated.

17. The method of Claim 16, further comprising the step of executing the run routine by activating a plug-in that is resident on the local computer.

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